

Mid-Peninsula High School

CONNECTIONS

MAGAZINE :: SUMMER 2025



Developing Fluency by Design: ASL the Mid-Pen Way, Page 11



Anyone who works in schools knows about the “thousand days of May”—that whirlwind of final projects, year-end grading, and countless events as we work to land the proverbial plane smoothly. While it’s undeniably a busy season, I actually love the energy on campus this time of year—especially because it culminates in celebrating our seniors at graduation.

If you haven’t attended a Mid-Pen graduation in the last five years, I hope you’ll come back sometime and experience it for yourself. It is a beautiful reflection of our Core Values—Respect, Kindness, Acceptance, and Responsibility—and is far more personal than the typical commencement ceremony. In recent years we’ve moved graduation outdoors, and each graduate is now introduced by their Core teacher. This small shift has transformed our ceremony into something uniquely Mid-Pen.

The ceremony begins with a moment of collective appreciation when I invite all the groups in attendance—parents and guardians, siblings, grandparents, cousins, friends, and our dedicated staff—to stand together and share their pride and love for the seniors on the risers. The student speakers are chosen for the honesty and power of their stories, and our senior musicians perform with the kind of skill and passion that reminds us just how extraordinary our music program is. And then comes the moment when each student is presented by their Core teacher, who shares anecdotes that offer glimpses into their intellect, heart, and spirit, before they cross the stage to receive their diploma. From start to finish, our graduation highlights the power of relationships and support—the true foundation of our students’ success. As our graduates look across the field and at their classmates on stage, they know without a doubt that they are loved.



The Class of 2025 will always hold a special place in my heart. We were freshmen together, arriving at Mid-Pen in the fall of 2021 as the world cautiously emerged from the pandemic. Like all high school students they navigated friendships, misunderstandings, growth, and a fair amount of messiness. And as I shared in my opening remarks at graduation, this remarkable class learned how to accept grace from their teachers and each other—and even more importantly, how to extend it to others.

In a world that feels increasingly chaotic and polarized, relationships built on a foundation of grace, empathy, and understanding are more essential than ever. Amid all the division and mistrust, small acts of kindness and patience take on profound meaning. Grace might be offering someone a second chance after a joke falls flat, listening without judgment, holding the door for someone with full arms, or simply being patient when someone is having a tough day. It’s recognizing that we can be scared and brave at the same time.

During their time at Mid-Pen, the students of the Class of 2025 learned to forgive, to accept, and to stand by one another—even and especially when it was difficult to do so. They chose to connect with classmates they didn’t know well, supported peers with whom they sometimes disagreed, and practiced generosity and kindness in moments when it was most challenging. In a world that increasingly prioritizes individualism at all costs, our Dragons chose to prioritize courage, compassion, and belonging. Knowing them as I do, I have to believe, as the poet Mary Oliver wrote, that this is what each of them will do with their one wild and precious life. 🐉

Karen Eshoo

CONNECTIONS

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The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the authors.



14 Hours, 1 Challenge, Infinite Possibilities

On a Saturday morning in March, while most students were still asleep in their beds, four Mid-Pen juniors—Elisabeth Scott, Kyrie Dybbs, Douglas Yenson, and Alex Shen—were already deep into the 2025 M3 Math Modeling Challenge, an international competition that asks students to apply mathematical thinking to complex, real-world problems.

This year’s challenge was especially timely: with global temperatures rising and heat waves becoming longer, stronger, and more frequent, teams were tasked with helping local authorities in either Memphis, Tennessee, or Birmingham, England, plan for the consequences of extreme heat. The Mid-Pen team chose Memphis and tackled three interconnected questions: How hot do non-air-conditioned homes get during a 24-hour heat wave? How much strain does that heat place on the power grid now—and in 20 years? And which neighborhoods are most vulnerable if the power goes out?

The students had to build models to predict indoor temperatures, forecast peak electricity demand, and create a vulnerability score to help officials equitably distribute resources. The goal: provide actionable insights to help city governments better protect their communities from heat-related power outages.

The challenge lasted 14 hours—from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.—with only brief breaks for meals and the occasional volleyball game. “Over those 14 hours,



I would bet they were working 12 hours on the math,” said math teacher and team coach Ethan Weker. “They have to look at the problem, make sense of it, and come up with whatever data is appropriate to try to make better sense of the problem.”

Though Ethan couldn’t assist with the problem itself, he was available to answer general math questions and offer moral support. Sustained by Red Vines and Sour Patch Kids, the team completed two of the three questions and made strong progress on the third—an impressive feat under pressure.

“It was a real brain teaser,” said Alex.

The school’s annual participation in the modeling challenge answers the age-old question, “Why are we learning this?” Mid-Pen students go out into the world collaborative, creative thinkers stepping up to solve the world’s toughest challenges. 🐉



From left, math modeling team members Douglas Yenson, Alex Shen, Kyrie Dybbs, and Elisabeth Scott.

Tools to Thrive: A Look Inside Mid-Pen’s Learning Support Program

It starts with a soft landing.

“Everyone is welcome,” says Elaine Barry Ed.D., Mid-Pen’s Learning Specialist. “This is a warm, soft landing when you need help—if you’re confused about a project, if you didn’t really understand what the topic was in class that day, come on in. Let us walk alongside you while you do high school.”

That invitation to step into support—at any time, for any reason—isn’t reserved for a select group. Mid-Pen’s Learning Support Team (LST) is here for every student. Whether it’s figuring out how to study for a test, outlining a paper, or prioritizing assignments, the team is a trusted resource for all learners.

For Caroline Lee P’28, the impact was immediate. “My daughter felt instantly comfortable here—just stepping foot on campus, even during the Open House,” she recalls. “We were seeing an outside educational consultant four times a week before. Here, we’ve dialed it back to once a week, and she

accesses the Learning Center for help and studying. It’s been great. Very seamless.”

A Program Transformed

Over the past two years, Mid-Pen’s Learning Support Program has evolved significantly—not just in staffing, but in spirit and scope. The arrival of Elaine Barry in 2023, followed by Math Specialist Sahily Hilerio and English Language Arts Specialist Gen Greer in 2024, has reshaped the program into a dynamic, student-centered network of support.

Together, they’ve reimagined not just the Study Center class, but how students approach learning itself—with greater confidence, self-awareness, and tools aligned with their individual strengths.

Elaine, Gen, and Sahily make it a point to know by name every student in the school, not just those enrolled in the Study Center class. “It’s just an acknowledgment that we’re here and we’re excited to see you,” says Gen. That steady, supportive presence is deeply felt in the Enrichment Center (EC)—the





The Learning Support Team includes, from left, Sahily Hilerio, Elaine Barry, and Gen Greer.

team's home base and a welcoming hub for students throughout the day.

Located at the literal and symbolic heart of campus, the EC is highly visible and always open. Students pass through to print out work, ask a question, or just find a moment of calm. "From 8:30 in the morning to 4:30 in the afternoon, this is a nonstop machine where students come in to do their work," says Sahily.

Study Center, Reimagined

Study Center has long been a staple of the Mid-Pen experience, but in the past year, it's undergone a quiet transformation. With expanded staffing and a more intentional curriculum, every student in the class now receives individualized, proactive support as part of their regular school day.

Yes, there's still time to get work done—but the class now goes deeper. It helps students understand how they learn best, and equips them with personalized strategies that stick. The goal isn't just completion—it's empowerment.

Gen recalls working with a student who struggled to get started on writing assignments. "He had all these wonderful ideas, but they weren't coming together on paper," she said. So Gen sat down and had a natural conversation with him about the material—and began typing his words as he spoke. When she turned the screen around, the student saw the beginnings of a full draft.

"He was feeling like a failure," she recalled, "because he didn't realize that using a scribe or voice-to-text software can actually be part of the process of writing a paper."

Accommodations are not advantages—they are the equity tools that give every learner a fair shot. And learning differently doesn't mean your engine is broken; it just means you need a different kind of fuel.

Building a Culture of Support

The Learning Support Team doesn't work in isolation. Core teachers, classroom faculty, coaches, and even front desk staff all play a role in helping students stay on track and feel supported. At Mid-Pen, accountability and care are shared responsibilities.

The LST serves as a partner to the entire community, ensuring that accommodations are consistently implemented throughout the school. They help students learn to advocate for themselves, move beyond the stigma of needing help, and embrace a model where support is smart, strategic, and empowering.

When students have the right support and the right tools, the effects ripple outward. Instead of feeling stuck or discouraged, they begin to feel capable—not just as students, but as people.

They show up differently—in class, in friendships, and at home.

Caroline Lee has seen this firsthand. "She is a different person, and I mean that in the best way," she says of her daughter. "Middle school was some of the toughest years. She'd come home from school and go straight to her room. Now, she's bubbly, she's got personality. When we get home, she'll hang out with me in the kitchen and talk about her day."

At Mid-Pen, Caroline's daughter hasn't just found academic support. She's found belonging—and a community that sees her, supports her, and helps her shine. 🐉



A Week to Remember

A Joyful Spring Celebration of the Arts

This spring, Mid-Pen’s arts program took center stage—literally—in a weeklong celebration that showcased just how dynamic and expansive the creative life of the school has become.

The festivities kicked off May 13 with the school’s annual Spring Concert at the historic Guild Theatre in Menlo Park, with more than 200 family, staff, and friends packing the house to cheer on our student musicians. Each of Mid-Pen’s six music ensembles performed a polished, multi-song set, featuring everything from lush vocal harmonies to soaring guitar solos. The playlist ranged widely—from The Cure’s brooding *A Forest* to the heartfelt rhythms of Natalia Lafourcade’s *Nunca Es Suficiente*—highlighting both technical skill and emotional depth.

Guiding the process was music teacher Jameson Swanagon, below, whose year-long work with students, many of them first-time musicians, was on

full display. Adding to the excitement was a special visit from professional musician Ryan Michaels ’95, half of the country-pop duo Haley & Michaels. Leading up to the concert, he sat in on rehearsals, shared behind-the-scenes industry insight, and helped students build confidence as performers.

Funded by the school’s Dominic Vogel ’20 Fund for the Performing Arts, Ryan worked with each ensemble, offering suggestions that ranged from dissecting the band’s energy to “telegraphing” song transitions and reinforcing rhythm sections. He emphasized creating security for vocalists. “The singer needs to trust the landing is there,” he said. “Your job is to make them feel secure enough to perform without hesitation.”

Later in the week, campus was transformed into a multi-sensory gallery for Night of the Arts. Led by art teacher Lesly Vazquez, students filled every hallway with year-end projects: charcoal portraits,



Watch our students perform at the annual Spring Concert.



towering painted canvases, whimsical 3D-printed creatures, and mixed-media sculptures. The range of work reflected not only technical growth but bold individual vision.

The evening also included performances from DragonWeek's *Golden Age of Radio* class, featuring vintage radio plays complete with music, sound effects, and clever faux ads. Theatre students kept the energy high with an audience-fueled improv

revue that drew big laughs and showcased quick thinking and collaboration. To close the night, music students returned to the stage for an encore performance that brought the crowd to its feet.

Together, these events offered a vivid reminder of how alive and evolving the arts are at Mid-Pen. With dedicated faculty, eager young artists, and alumni who come back to share their gifts, creativity at Mid-Pen is not just nurtured—it's celebrated. 🐉





Recognizing Milestone Anniversaries at Mid-Pen

At the close of each school year, Mid-Pen comes together to celebrate the colleagues whose commitment, care, and leadership have made a lasting impact on our community. This year, we honored three educators—each at a different stage of their Mid-Pen career. These milestones reflect the many ways our staffulty shape Mid-Pen—not just through years served, but through the values they live every day.

35 Years

For 35 years, **Heidi Schiessler** has been a steady presence and shaping force at Mid-Pen: a counselor, administrator, teacher, and quiet powerhouse who has done nearly every job there is to do.



From scheduling and college advising to counseling families and supervising teachers, Heidi has truly been Mid-Pen’s ultimate utility player. But it’s her deep care for people—students, staff, and families alike—that defines her legacy.

Whether she’s supporting a struggling teen, quietly solving a behind-the-scenes crisis, or mentoring a young teacher to be their best professional self, Heidi leads with integrity and heart.

At a tribute to her at the end of the year, one colleague shared, “You’ve been a teacher of kids, but also of adults. I feel like I really learned how to become a teacher by meeting with you.” Others referred to her as “someone we could really rely on for all of our problems” and “a mentor on multiple levels.”

Head of School Karen Eshoo described Heidi as both a keeper of institutional memory and an advocate for growth. “She honors the past without clinging to it, always looking for what’s best for students now,” said Karen. “Her humility, intellect, and compassion have helped guide Mid-Pen through many transitions, and her willingness to sit with complexity and ask the right questions has made her a go-to thought partner for generations of staffulty.”

To serve one school community for so long with such grace, intelligence, and joy is a rare achievement. In so many ways, Heidi’s humor, insight, and humanity have helped shape Mid-Pen into what it is today.

10 Years

Mid-Pen also celebrated **David Oliver**, who after 10 years of service will be moving to Iraq in August to teach at the British Grammar Schools in Erbil.



With a gruff exterior that belies deep care for his students—and a famously tiny Fiat 500 that somehow fits his towering frame—David is far more than a beloved science teacher; he’s a mentor, advocate, and steady force in the life of the school.

Colleagues note the deep relationships David builds with young people, especially those who need a steady adult in their corner. He volunteers without hesitation, whether assisting at after-school parent events or cheering on the basketball and volleyball teams. After one particularly hard-fought volleyball match, a student ran over to give David a big hug. “David was the first person she wanted to see after that loss,” a colleague recalled. “That says everything about who he is.”

David is admired not only for his constant presence around the school but for his professional openness to revising curriculum and experimenting with new approaches. We will miss him and wish him well on his next adventure.

5 Years

Director of Teaching, Learning, and Equity **Jorge Rodriguez** marked five years of service. Jorge is known for listening deeply and thoughtfully—even when tensions are high—and often responds with a quiet “okay” that somehow carries empathy, clarity, and care.



Jorge’s deep passion for teaching and student-centered learning is well known, and his voice has been especially valued in moments of parent communication, equity initiatives, and support for student groups like the Latinx Club. Whether helping message a tough issue or encouraging community at a staff gathering, Jorge leads with humility, flexibility, and heart.

“You bring calmness to whatever is happening around you,” said Karen. “You bring out the best in people.” 🐉



A Tapestry of Growth, Gratitude, and Community

On the morning of Saturday, May 24, more than 350 students, families, alumni, faculty, and friends gathered on Mid-Pen’s field to celebrate the 33 members of the Class of 2025. The skies were blue, the breeze was cool, and the atmosphere was one of joy and reflection.

Head of School Karen Eshoo opened the ceremony by welcoming guests and paying special tribute to former Head of School Chloe Kamprath, who attended the ceremony. Nearly 25 years ago, when Mid-Pen lost the lease on its former campus, it was Chloe’s vision and leadership that made the Willow Road campus possible. As Karen reminded us, quite simply: we wouldn’t be here without her.

The heart of the morning belonged to the graduates, who were presented by their Core teachers as they received their diplomas, and the four student speakers, who spoke with honesty and heart about what Mid-Pen has meant to them and the hopes they carry into the future.



Monze Jaimes, who is recognizable to late arriving students as the smiling office aide who hands out tardy slips, welcomed the community and shared a vivid memory from the first day of senior year, when she noticed how small the new freshmen

looked, which sparked reflection on how far she and her classmates have come, not just in age and size, but in self-awareness and resilience.

Monze celebrated the everyday memories that made her Mid-Pen experience meaningful. She gave special thanks to Registrar Stacie Foreman ’15, calling her “the glue to Mid-Pen,” and reminded classmates that growth comes at one’s own pace. A once-quiet student, she stood confidently before the crowd to remind everyone that growth looks different for everyone and that strength often comes from quiet perseverance. She celebrated her role in the Latinx Club, which worked this year to support immigrant communities and promote local Latin-owned businesses. Her speech ended with a deeply personal thank-you in Spanish to her parents and grandparents, and a charge to her classmates: “Be the new light in your communities. Keep being unapologetically you. The world is waiting.”

Ruth Schar opened her speech with warmth and humor, reflecting on a unique 17-year relationship with Mid-Pen—both as a student and as the daughter of long-time Director of Technology Anne Marie Schar.



Growing up in the halls of the school, when she was known as “Baby Ruth,” she said Mid-Pen felt like a second home long before she enrolled. She shared candidly about the challenges she faced entering high school—low confidence, social anxiety, the pandemic, and her parents’ divorce—and how Mid-Pen became the safe, accepting community she had longed for.



Describing her journey from self-doubt to self-assurance, Ruth said that through the love of her friends, the encouragement of her family, and the welcoming arms of the Mid-Pen community, she found the courage to take risks, come out, and lead with authenticity. She played sports, led clubs, traveled abroad, and discovered new parts of herself—including a love of music and a commitment to LGBTQ+ and diversity work. Her words captured the spirit of transformation: “The people whom Baby Ruth gave her whole self to... protected, treasured, and nurtured her, until she became me.”

Quoting Robert Frost, Ruth reminded classmates that they still have “miles to go,” but wished them happiness in whatever path they choose. She closed with a heartfelt tribute to the school that nurtured her: “Thank you, I love you.”



Chloe Kummerer offered a beautifully metaphorical reflection, beginning with memories of a childhood sewing camp where the instructor introduced herself through a wildly mismatched quilt—each scrap holding a story, each imperfection a piece of identity. Chloe used this image to frame her own journey at Mid-Pen, describing how the past four years have become the fabric of who she is. Her “quilt” now includes the determination of taking advanced classes, the camaraderie of the volleyball team, the insights gained from Gender Studies class, and the daily kindness of peers and teachers alike.

She emphasized that what makes Mid-Pen special isn’t magic—it’s choice. Students choose to show up, to be kind, to create community. Chloe illustrated this powerfully through a moment at prom, watching classmates from different social circles dance and connect, each interaction another patch in the quilt they carry forward. Her message to the Class of 2025 was clear and moving: we are made by our memories, and we create them through the simple, powerful act of choosing to show up with love.

Andy Hoffman framed his reflections through the John Donne poem “No Man is an Island”, which became a personal touchstone during his time at Mid-Pen. He drew from the poem’s message—that each person is intrinsically part of something larger than themselves—to articulate what made the Mid-Pen community so transformative. “Mid-Pen has no single-man islands,” Andy said. “Together we are an island.”



Andy shared that when he first arrived at Mid-Pen, he was quiet, unsure of himself, and uncomfortable being seen. The idea of giving a graduation speech would have been unthinkable. Yet through the support and generosity of his peers and teachers, he found both confidence and belonging. He recalled learning unexpected things from classmates—facts about lionfish and bugs, German phrases and doll-making techniques—and receiving guidance on





everything from using a camera’s manual settings to perfecting an overhand volleyball serve. These small but meaningful exchanges became the threads of connection that shaped his experience.

He described one of his most profound realizations happening at prom, during the final, raucous dance to “YMCA,” when he was overcome with emotion at the sight of his classmates dancing together, arms raised, unified. That, he said, was community—messy, joyful, unrepeatable, and deeply human.

Andy closed with the South African philosophy of Ubuntu: “I am, because of what we are.” He acknowledged the heartache of moving on, of knowing his peers will never again gather in quite the same way. But he also recognized that each member of the Class of 2025 will carry that sense of community with them into the world. His final words were a note of gratitude and reverence—for Mid-Pen, for his class, and for the island they built together, person by person.

The Class of 2025 leaves Mid-Pen with quilts of their own making—stitched from challenge and comfort, discovery and risk, laughter and learning. They leave behind a community better for having known them and take with them the values that define Mid-Pen: respect, kindness, acceptance, and responsibility. As they head off into the world, we have no doubt they’ll carry those values—and each other—with them, wherever they go. 🐉



AWARDS

This year’s Founder’s Award was presented to **Chloe Kummerer**. The school’s highest honor, the Founder’s Award is given to the senior who best exemplifies the founding principles of Mid-Peninsula High School, including growth and change, achievement, determination, and character.

Rylee Catanzaro and **Lucas Kao** received the Douglas C. Thompson Award for Inspired Growth, given to one or more seniors who have achieved the greatest personal and/or academic growth during their time at Mid-Pen.

The Leonard W. Ely Community Award, given for the greatest contribution to the well-being of the school and/or outside community, was presented to two students this year, **Andy Hoffman** and **Chris Rivera**.

Ruth Schar received the Senior Award for high academic achievement.



More Than Just Signs: ASL at Mid-Pen is a Culture and a Community

At an impromptu community meeting, with students and staff packed shoulder-to-shoulder on the Mid-Pen gym bleachers, senior Chris Rivera '25 stood just off to the right of the speaker. Calm and confident, he interpreted the presentation into American Sign Language for ASL teacher Fatima Currimbhoy, seated in the crowd. Mid-Pen usually hires a professional interpreter for school-wide events, but this meeting had come together so quickly that Chris, a student, stepped up and delivered.

Moments like that don't happen by accident. They're the result of Mid-Pen's one-of-a-kind ASL program—an immersive, culturally rich experience that teaches far more than vocabulary.

Since his freshman year, Chris has studied ASL at Mid-Pen, where all classes are taught by Deaf educators and conducted in silence. "I didn't really know anything about ASL at all when I came to Mid-Pen," he says. "But I already speak Spanish, so I wanted to try something different." What he found was a program that not only taught him a language, but invited him into a culture and a community.

When it introduced ASL 15 years ago, Mid-Pen was one of the first schools in the Bay Area to offer the language. For the past nine years it has been one of the only high schools in the area where students learn ASL from a Deaf teacher, a distinction that transforms how the language is taught and understood. Classes are fully immersive: no audible voices, just visual communication. Students rely on their eyes, hands, and facial expressions to connect and express themselves.

Fatima says teaching ASL is a way to "rupture" assumptions. Too often, people think of ASL as just hand shapes or gestures. "ASL isn't just simple words. It's its own language with grammar and structure, on par with any other language," she said. Fatima herself didn't realize ASL was a distinct language until taking a linguistics class in college. Her goal is for students to understand the linguistic richness of ASL and to gain confidence in using it to communicate with clarity and emotion.

Because ASL doesn't involve reading or writing in a new alphabet, and the emphasis is on face-to-face,



Chris Rivera '25 speaks with prospective parents at an Admissions Open House last fall.



Sophomores Meeru Singhal and Reese Vetter sign during ASL class.

visual communication, it can be a more accessible second language for some students. For others, however, the challenge lies in the expressive nature of the language—using not just hands, but facial expressions and body movement to convey meaning. This aspect can be especially powerful for students who struggle to identify or show emotion; over time, signing can help them build emotional awareness and confidence in self-expression.

The silence of the classroom can be uncomfortable for students initially, but Fatima works hard to create a safe space for her students to learn. Students quickly learn to be intentional, observant, and respectful while also building empathy. The visual, expressive, and deeply human nature of ASL helps students appreciate Deaf culture, which is often misunderstood. As Fatima says, “People think that Deaf people are an isolated group who don’t stand up for themselves and don’t know their rights, but they are anything but that.”

This perspective is what makes Fatima’s teaching so powerful. Her presence in the classroom offers students direct access to Deaf culture. It also shapes how they think about communication, accessibility, and inclusion in their broader lives.

Mid-Pen’s ASL students go beyond the classroom, building authentic communication skills. Students who take four years of the language consistently reach high levels of fluency, and many go on to consider careers in interpreting, audiology, or Deaf education. Like Chris, several students each year gain the confidence to interpret in real-time, in real situations.

At last year’s Admissions Open House, for example, a Spanish-speaking parent had a question for Fatima. Without hesitation, Chris stepped in to interpret across three languages. “It was the first time I’d ever done that,” he recalls. “It was so cool—such a unique thing to do.”

In that moment, what could have been a communication barrier became a three-way bridge, built by a student who understood not just the signs, but the significance behind them.

Fatima hopes the program continues to grow, through more partnerships with Deaf organizations, more guest speakers, more field trips to places like the California School for the Deaf, and more real-world learning. This past spring, the ASL Club brought in a Deaf-owned food truck called Mozzarella, using food and conversation to build connection and awareness across campus.

At Mid-Pen, ASL is more than a class. It’s an invitation to communicate, to connect, and to see the world differently. It’s not just about what students learn, but who they become in the process. 🐉



ASL teacher Fatima Currimbhoy.

From the Court to the Track, Mid-Pen Athletes Make Their Mark

By Kurt Lange, Athletic Director

From buzzer-beaters to breakout performances, Mid-Pen's winter and spring sports seasons offered plenty of reasons for Dragon pride. Across five teams and nearly 80 student-athletes, our students put in the work—improving skills, building teamwork, and representing the school with heart. Here's a look back at how the Dragons fared in basketball, volleyball, tennis, and track and field.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Coach: Colleen Carter

Under the steady guidance of Coach Colleen Carter, the girls basketball team showed impressive growth this year, finishing with a 4-7 league record and a 6-11 overall mark. The team notched emphatic wins over EPA Academy (twice), Latino College Prep, Apostles Lutheran, and KIPP Navigate. The season's most unforgettable moment came at Mountain View Academy, when junior Scottie Miller sank a game-winning shot just before the buzzer after a beautifully executed full-court play with only eight seconds on the clock.

The roster blended senior leadership from Ruth Schar, Lillie Martins, and Chloe Kummerer with strong contributions from younger players. League honors went to Lillie Martins (second-team all-league), Kimberly Rodriguez '26, and Amelia Filo '27 (both honorable mention), reflecting the team's depth and promise.



BOYS BASKETBALL

Coach: Erin Whittaker

The boys basketball team bounced back this season with grit and determination, finishing 6-7 in league and 9-10 overall. The Dragons came up big in the closing stretch, winning their final three games in a push for a CCS tournament bid. Despite not receiving a postseason invitation, the team's late-season surge—including wins over SF Christian, Esperanza, and Stratford Academy—demonstrated growth and resilience.

The squad was anchored by seniors Nayan Chawla, Matt Beach, Ryan Yoshida, and James Carpenter, who earned all-league honorable mention. Sophomore Oliver Carpenter, who averaged 25 points per game, earned second-team all-league honors, and junior Mike Latour, our best three-point shooter with over 15 points per game, also received honorable mention.

BOYS VOLLEYBALL

Coaches: Alec and Franc Salazar

Though the win column didn't reflect it, the boys volleyball team showed significant progress across ten matches this spring. The Dragons came within a hair's breadth of victory twice against rival Kehillah, losing narrowly in two tightly contested 3-2 matches.



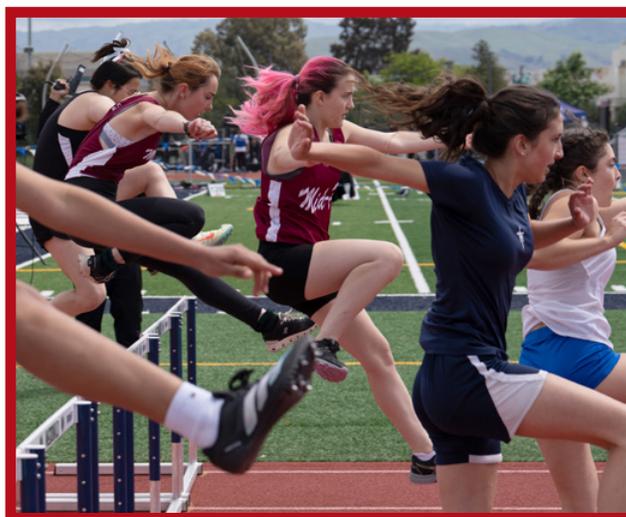
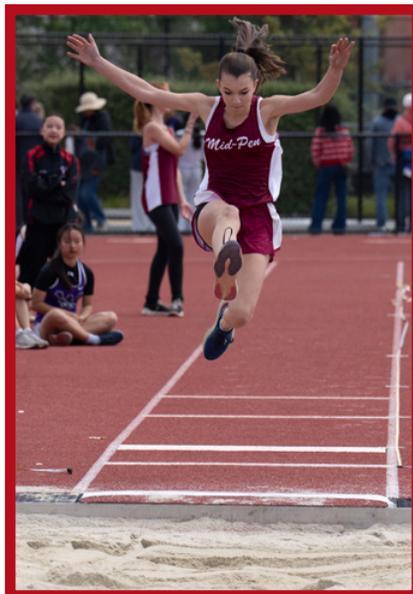
The team was led by seniors Ilya Bakar, Devin Crouse, and Logan Schainker. Juniors Ian Cairns, Kyrie Dybbs, Xyro Patch, and Alex Shen gained valuable experience, while the underclassmen core will look to build on this foundation next year. Coaches Alec and Franc Salazar provided skilled, patient leadership in developing this young team.

CO-ED TENNIS

Coaches: Raul Salazar and Kurt Heise

Despite a rain-shortened season, Mid-Pen's co-ed tennis team made the most of its opportunities. With only six matches played, the team finished with an impressive 5-1 record, including double wins over Kehillah and Stratford Academy, plus a narrow victory against Priory. Their only loss came against perennial powerhouse Crystal Springs Uplands—but even there, sophomore Oliver Carpenter scored a commanding singles win over their top player.

Seniors Maclen Sheehy, James Carpenter, and Nayan Chawla each notched multiple victories, as did juniors Mike Latour, Ben Bonnstetter, and Alex Smith. Seniors Liv Katz and Sophie Ortz Larios, junior Holden Wilms, and sophomores Christopher Gray-Spight, Jaqui Urvizo, and Brianna Zaragoza Recinos rounded out a



roster that balanced competitive fire with team spirit. Coaches Raul Salazar and Kurt Heise provided expert guidance to a team with a wide range of experience and skills.

CO-ED TRACK AND FIELD

Coaches: Alan Cameron and Gen Greer

Track and field saw one of its largest rosters in years with 31 athletes competing across three league meets. At the league championship, the girls team placed 8th out of 23 schools and the boys team finished 11th—a testament to both depth and individual achievement.

Junior Baz Dowling took first in the triple jump and placed 7th in the long jump, while freshman Eli Sundgren earned a 3rd place finish in the high jump. Seniors Ruth Schar and Chloe Kummerer placed 5th and 7th respectively in both the 100 and 300-meter hurdles. Senior Matt Beach finished 5th in the 100-meter dash. Rylee Catanzaro '25 (girls) and Jasper Lowpensky '26 (boys) each secured 8th place finishes

in shot put. Reese Vetter '27 placed 6th in the long jump, and Eli Garcia '27 finished 9th in the 110-meter hurdles.

With 11 graduating seniors, the team bids farewell to an accomplished group and celebrates its most successful season yet—thanks to the dedication of Coaches Alan Cameron and Gen Greer. 🐉

MANNY ANDRADE '09

Climbing Mountains, One Step at a Time

When Manny Andrade '09 stood before the Mid-Pen graduating class of 2025, he wasn't just delivering this year's alumni commencement speech—he was embodying the journey he urged students to embrace: a steady, persistent climb toward their goals, no matter the obstacles.

A proud Mid-Pen alum, Manny's story is one of perseverance, humility, and deep gratitude for the support systems that helped him along the way. "Before having these amazing accomplishments," he told graduates, "I had many challenges that I had to overcome." Chief among them: starting school without knowing a word of English, the son of parents who could offer love and support—but had little formal education themselves. "My father was illiterate and my mother had the education level of a third grader," he shared. "I could have quit at any time and they would have understood. But something inside me always told me: move forward."

That drive carried Manny through Mid-Pen, where he received the Founder's Award, the school's top honor for seniors, and on to the College of San Mateo, Notre Dame de Namur University, and eventually Seattle University School of Law. Along the way, he built the academic and personal tools needed to thrive—often by learning to ask for help. "In the long run, this curse of having to ask for help was a blessing in disguise," he said. "I became very comfortable speaking with individuals I didn't know. And I became very comfortable asking for help."

Manny's legal career has already taken him to impressive heights. After earning his Juris Doctor,



he clerked at the Washington State Court of Appeals and then for Chief Justice Steven González of the Washington State Supreme Court. Today, he is a personal injury attorney in Seattle, part of a firm where he continues to seek—and offer—guidance. "You just have to ask," he reminded graduates. "I haven't met anyone who wasn't willing to help."

His speech returned often to the metaphor of climbing mountains.

"Don't try to climb it in one day," he advised. "Take it one step at a time. Don't forget to rest." That message, grounded in lived experience, resonated deeply with the graduating class. So too did his tribute to the values he first encountered at Mid-Pen—respect, kindness, acceptance, and responsibility. "At every place I've worked," he said, "people are happy to work with me because I respect them. And where I haven't been respected—it's been a horrible experience. Don't stay in a place where people don't value you."

In reflecting on his time at Mid-Pen, Manny named several faculty members who left a lasting impact: Jon Austin, Laurie Miller, Dave Richardson, Kurt Lange, Larry Johnston, Jodi Wright, Nancy Brown, and others. "Thank you for always believing in me," he said. "That really mattered a lot." He closed with a quote from César Chávez that could have been a summary of his own path: "To make a great dream come true, the first requirement is a great capacity to dream. The second is persistence."

From a kindergarten classroom where he couldn't understand the language to the chambers of the state Supreme Court, Manny Andrade has never stopped dreaming—or climbing. 🧗



ALUMNI UPDATES

This spring, Mid-Pen hosted two alumni reunions—one for recent grads and one for those a few more years out. About 30 Dragons from the Classes of 2021–2024 returned to campus for the Young Alumni BBQ, where they reconnected with one another and their old teachers over burgers, hot dogs, and lots of laughs on the school patio. A smaller but spirited group from earlier classes gathered at Barebottle Brewing in Menlo Park for a casual evening of drinks and conversation. Whether reminiscing with old friends or catching up with former teachers, the spirit of community was strong.



Clockwise from top left: Tanisha Gundubogula '24, Katie Gonzalez '24, and Sanjana Kudva '23; Henry Chant '24 and Charlie Woods '24; former math teacher Nicole Willits and Kieran Rege '16; and Casey Schaefer '16, Emmett Rodriguez '16, and Director of Admissions Randy Johnson.



Several beloved longtime and former staff members got together for a mini-reunion at Graduation this year. From left: former College Advisor and Academic Director Dave Richardson, Assistant Head of School Heidi Schiessler, former Head of School Chloe Kamprath, and English teacher Laurie Miller. Their presence was a touching reminder of the deep roots and lasting relationships that define the Mid-Pen community.

Our condolences to the family of **Emily Osterman '97**, who passed away on June 7 after a three-year battle with a rare form of lung cancer. A spirited and incisive thinker with a dry wit and a fierce sense of integrity, Emily challenged convention from an early age. Traditional classrooms were not for her, but she found her stride at Mid-Pen, where she received the school's Founder's Award. After earning her degree in business from UMass Amherst, she spent nearly three decades in employee services at tech companies, including as a respected program manager at Facebook. Even through the trials of her illness, Emily continued to work, study, and bring joy to those around her. She is remembered for her work ethic, strength, and unshakable authenticity.

Mike Barkoff '04 started a new job as a Commercial Account Manager at OPSWAT, a leading provider of critical infrastructure cybersecurity.

Daisy Magana '11 is living in Porterville, CA, where she is busy as the mother of four boys and as Food Systems Director for Foodlink Tulare County. She attended the University of Redlands, where she received a BA in Psychology. "Growing food and working towards a more food secure Central Valley through food systems work," she writes. "Mid-Pen proved to me that there is more than one way to succeed."

Congratulations to **Harry Sell '17**, who began a new role in February as a deputy public defender in San Bernardino County. Harry—pictured far left—earned his JD from UC Davis School of Law in 2024 and his BA in History from UC Riverside in 2021. Wishing him well at a goodbye party for his move to Southern California are, from left, Malcolm Willig '17, Giuliana Peccolo '17, and Justine Tsai '15.



Tasha Epstein '21 graduated Magna Cum Laude from Brandeis University in May, having completed a total of two majors (Sociology and Women's, Sexuality, and Gender Studies) and three minors (Legal Studies, Social Policy, and Creative Arts). "I was a class away from a third major in American Studies, but ended up deciding to focus on other subjects," she writes. "I also recently successfully received my NREMT certification! Just using my gap year before applying to law school to gain work experience and perhaps once in my life, chill out. Haha!"

Along with several other recent alums, **Fin Collart '24** turned out for the Spring Concert at the Guild in May. "My favorite memory of Mid-Pen was doing music my senior year. I miss being able to sing and play guitar, I genuinely loved the program." Fin is headed to SF State in the fall to study Cinema.

Gratitude

For an Exceptional Year

This year's record-breaking support underscores the kindness, generosity, and deep sense of community that make Mid-Pen such an extraordinary place.

At Mid-Peninsula High School, kindness is more than a value we teach – it's a way of being that permeates our entire community. It's in the way students look out for one another, in how our teachers go the extra mile, and in the generosity that flows so naturally from families, alumni, and friends who care deeply about this school.

Our Head of School, Karen Eshoo, captured this spirit beautifully at our Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast in May. She shared how, when children are young, they're quick to shoot up their hands and call out, "Oooh! Oooh! Pick me!" whenever a teacher asks for a volunteer – eager to help before they even know what's involved. Over time, most people lose that impulse. But not at Mid-Pen. Here, our parents, trustees, alumni, and friends continue to say "Oooh! Oooh! Pick me!" whenever the call goes out – whether it's making DragonFund calls, helping with DragonFest, serving on a committee, or investing in our students' journeys through generous gifts.

This year's record-breaking DragonFund is a shining example of that extraordinary willingness to step up. Together, 225 donors contributed an unprecedented \$869,936 – by far a school record. Participation was equally inspiring: 100% of our trustees and staffulty joined in, alongside over 80% of current families. In total, through the DragonFund, the Douglas C. Thompson Fund for Class Trips, and other annual contributions, our community gave nearly \$900,000 to support Mid-Pen's mission this year.

These contributions go directly to enriching our students' lives. Because of you, they learn in an environment that sees and celebrates them, with the support and flexibility they need to thrive.

Your gifts helped fund transformative DragonWeek experiences this spring, from white-water rafting and horseback riding along the California coast, to bouldering in Joshua Tree, exploring opera houses and medieval towns in Vienna, Bratislava, and Budapest, and delving into Chicago's vibrant art scene through workshops and museum visits.

Our community also gathered once again at Pinstripes in San Mateo for DragonFest – a joyful evening focused on fun, connection, and belonging, captured in the smiling faces throughout this Report on Giving. Meanwhile, our Think Big Be Bold Campaign continues to move forward, with campus expansion plans evolving to meet the needs of our students and the opportunities ahead.

None of this would be possible without the tireless dedication of so many. I want to offer special thanks to Claudia Rivera P'25 '28, our DragonFund Parent Appeal Chair; to Sparky Rhode P'27, Parents Association Co-President; and above all to Heather Hoffman P'25, who concludes three years of outstanding leadership as PA President. Their enthusiasm and hard work exemplify the very best of Mid-Pen.

Thank you for another remarkable year of generosity and partnership. Your support – grounded in kindness and a deep commitment to our students – ensures that Mid-Pen remains a place where young people grow into confident, compassionate adults, ready to make their mark on the world. For this, we are truly grateful.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Phil Abrahamson
Chair, Board of Trustees



DRAGONFUND GIFTS

INDIVIDUALS

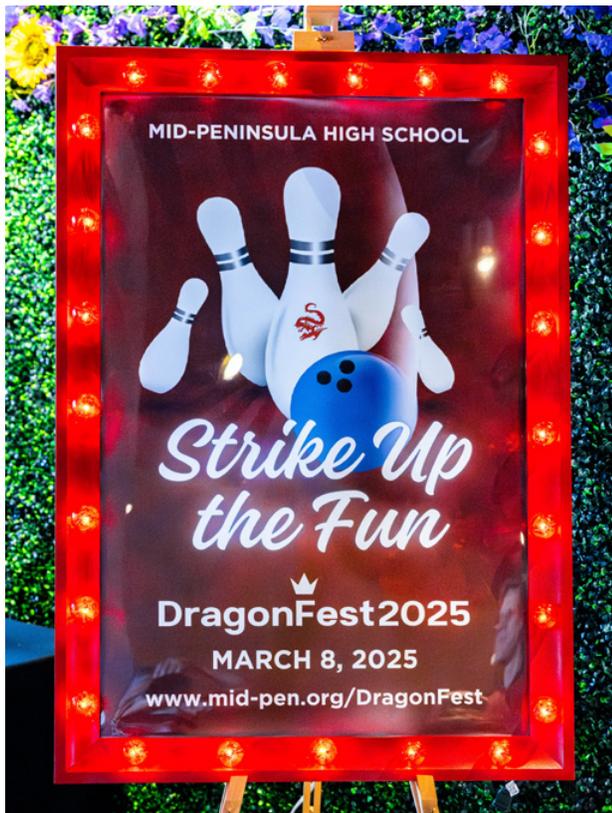
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 Kate Ague
 Janet Ague-Kennedy
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 Mark Ankenman & Amanda Edmonds
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REPORT ON GIVING



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- Leo Tenenblat & Ingrid Cotoros



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The following donors requested that a portion of their gifts be designated for specific purposes.

Athletics

Joseph & Lucia Baldwin
 Craig & Georgina Cooper
 Lester & Ava Wollman
 Philip Wollman '21
 Norman & Katherine Yoshida

Equity and Inclusion

Levi & Gisele Garraway
 Brent Tolosko & Deborah Marshall
 Fredric Wee & Cynthia Lee

Flexible Tuition

Kendall Anderson '12
 Mark Anson & Mary Hayes
 Christopher & Deborah Crouse
 David Oliver
 Shirley Taboada
 Tara Theobald-Anderson

Music Program

Theodore Shen & Fan Zhang
 The Arts

Staffulty Support

Dave & Emily Fisher
 Pamela Greene & Robert Rhode
 Sebastian Strachan '21

Spring Concert at the Guild Theatre

Eric & Jennifer Amdursky
 James Carpenter '25

Atul & Michelle Chawla
 Steve Dowling & Petra Wright
 Christopher Kummerer & Emilie Blase
 Theodore Shen & Fan Zhang
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 Jeffery Welser & Michael Guthrie
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Theatre Program

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 Aaron Rubin & Elizabeth Werba
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The Academic Experience

Majd Bakar & Carla Hindie
 Kirk & Lise Latour

The Arts

Darren Bonnstetter & Katherine Johnson
 Patrick Devine & Linda Jiang
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 Everett & Jennifer Meyer
 James Olivas
 Elizabeth Woolford

RESTRICTED GIFTS

The following donors requested that a portion of their gifts be restricted for specific purposes.

The Douglas C. Thompson Fund for Class Trips

Lisa & Detlef Braun
 Stacie Foreman '15
 Mark Lentczner & John Horigan
 Eduardo & Susana Martins
 Robbie Nero-Young
 Jose & Claudia Rivera
 Mary Speiser

Flexible Tuition

The The Eucalyptus Foundation



THINK BIG BE BOLD CAMPAIGN

The most significant fundraising initiative in the school's history, the Think Big Be Bold Campaign will transform our campus. Thank you to the following supporters whose generous gifts, pledges, and pledge payments received in 2024-2025 have helped bring our campus renovation and expansion a big step closer to reality!

The Benevity Community Impact Fund

Lisa Braun & Dettel Braun ¹⁵

Jonathan Carpenter & Caroline Nolan

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Shari DelCarlo & Ron Johnson

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John Northway & Lisa Grote ¹⁵

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Jing Wang & Hongjun Zhu ⁵

HONOR AND MEMORIAL GIFTS

In honor of Cameron Main '22
Diane Main

In honor of Ethan Weker
John & Callie Turk

In honor of Kurt Lange,
Tara Theobald-Anderson,
Meenu Baloda, Laurie Miller,
and Shelley Willig
Fredric Wee & Cynthia Lee

In honor of Phil Abrahamson
Mark Anson & Mary Hayes

In memory of Bret
Studebaker '08

Mary Lazarus & Robert Lazarus

In memory of Brian Y. Fung
Lester & Ava Wollman
Philip Wollman '21

In memory of Dominic Vogel '20
David Oliver

GIFTS IN KIND

Karen Eshoo



⁵ 5 or more years of consecutive annual giving

¹⁰ 10 or more years of consecutive annual giving

¹⁵ 15 or more years of consecutive annual giving



The list of donors includes gifts received between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025. We have made every attempt to ensure the accuracy of this report. We sincerely apologize for any inadvertent errors or omissions. Please contact the Development Office at henry@mid-pen.org with any corrections.

THE JOHNSTON SOCIETY

Beloved science teacher Larry Johnston dedicated more than 35 years to Mid-Pen, teaching almost right up until his death in 2015. Over the years, he inspired hundreds of Mid-Pen students, who often imitated his distinctive style.



Larry loved his Mid-Pen students, and he loved to travel. When he died, he left a bequest to help ensure that all students, regardless of financial need, are able to participate in Mid-Pen's travel program, which takes students to places as far afield as Ecuador to learn Spanish or Great Britain to study British history.

At the time, Larry's was the first bequest the school had ever received. The Johnston Society was established in his memory to recognize those donors who have named Mid-Pen as a beneficiary of a planned gift. Such gifts might include a bequest, gifts of life insurance, naming the school as a beneficiary of a retirement or other account. Planned gifts of any amount qualify and membership is purely honorary, meaning there are no dues, obligations, or solicitations. The greatest benefit of joining the Johnston Society is the satisfaction derived from making a lasting contribution to Mid-Peninsula High School's long-term prosperity.

JOHNSTON SOCIETY MEMBERS

Matthew James '87
Lawrence P. Johnston*
Merrilee Harris

Dolly Paterson
Anne Marie Schar

* deceased



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mid-pen.org/alumniupdates